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News Releases from Region 01

Landmark Agreement Will Ensure Faster and More Complete Cleanup of Housatonic River in Berkshire County

02/10/2020

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LENOX, Mass. – Following more than a year of mediated negotiations, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and seven parties have agreed to a faster and more comprehensive cleanup plan for the Housatonic River, in a settlement which will also provide major economic benefits for communities in Berkshire County.

In addition to EPA, the settling parties to the agreement are General Electric, the Rest of River Municipal Committee (the Towns of Lenox, Lee, Stockbridge, Great Barrington, and Sheffield), City of Pittsfield, State of Connecticut, C. Jeffrey Cook, Berkshire Environmental Action Team, and Massachusetts Audubon Society.

"This landmark agreement is a major milestone in our collective efforts to address PCB contamination in the Housatonic River, and we are looking forward to more comprehensive and faster cleanup activity in the river. The cleanup will achieve the goal of protecting human health and the environment and ensures that the Housatonic River and its floodplain are restored and preserved as an asset to the community and wildlife," **said EPA New England Regional Administrator Dennis Deziel.** "EPA is grateful to all of our partners who have remained focused on achieving an excellent outcome for the Housatonic River and for Berkshire County. We look forward to meeting with citizens in the communities to discuss the agreement and next steps."

Under the historic agreement, highly contaminated sediment will be removed from the river and floodplains and will be transported to existing licensed hazardous waste landfills elsewhere in the U.S. The agreement also calls for removal of more contaminated sediment from the river than previously required by EPA's 2016 cleanup plan, reducing the amount of capping of sediment in the river by one-third. Lower-level PCB contaminated materials will be consolidated into a single Upland Disposal Facility to be constructed adjacent to the Lane gravel pit in Lee.

The updated plans will improve ecological conditions in the river by removing two dams and by removing contaminated sediment behind all five dams within the affected area. Further, the agreement facilitates significant economic benefits for the Berkshire County towns of Lee, Lenox, Stockbridge, Great Barrington, and Sheffield, as well as the City of Pittsfield.

Key benefits of the agreement include:

- The immediate start to work on investigation and design of the cleanup;
- Significant cleanup enhancements to the previously defined remedy;
- A hybrid disposal approach, with the most contaminated waste transported out of state to licensed hazardous waste landfills, while the remaining less contaminated materials will be consolidated in a state-of-the-art, double-lined upland disposal facility;
- A substantial economic development package to municipalities of \$63 million, potential land transfers, and other benefits;
- Reduced impact to the communities and local roadways, and enhanced coordination with stakeholders; and
- A commitment to further research on innovative technologies, demonstration efforts and pilot studies.

EPA will participate in several public information opportunities to explain the Settlement Agreement and answer questions from citizens. EPA also intends to issue a revised Permit outlining proposed changes to the cleanup plan and will accept public comment on the proposed revised permit later this year. Public informational meetings will be hosted by the following municipalities:

Wednesday, February 19, 2020, 6:00 p.m.

Lee High School
300 Greylock Street
Lee, MA

Thursday, February 20, 2020, 6:00 p.m.

Monument Mountain High School
600 Stockbridge Road
Great Barrington, MA

Thursday, March 5, 2020, 6:00 p.m.

Herberg Middle School, Auditorium
501 Pomeroy Avenue
Pittsfield, MA

More information on the Settlement Agreement and EPA's efforts to address contamination in the Housatonic River: <https://www.epa.gov/ge-housatonic>

LAST UPDATED ON FEBRUARY 10, 2020